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ART. V.—*The Free Cities of Flanders.*

1. *Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne de la Maison de Valois.* Par M. de BARANTE. 11 tom. 8vo. Paris. 1825.
2. *Histoire de la Flandre depuis le Comte Gui de Dampierre jusqu' aux Ducs de Bourgogne.* Par JULES VAN PRAET. 2 tom. 8vo. Bruxelles. 1828.
3. *Notice Historique sur la Ville de Gand.* Par A. VOISIN. 12mo. Gand. 1826.

THE history of a community, which has run its career of public freedom, is fraught with peculiar interest to those of later times, who are still engaged in trying a similar great experiment on the capacity of man for self-government. Its example addresses instruction and admonition to them, equally as to the rest of the world. And they can enter, with all the sympathy of perfect fellow-feeling, into the triumphs which honored, or the reverses and errors which saddened, the sojourn of liberty in the bosom of a people which has now ceased to be free. The commonwealths of Greece and Rome, by reason of their long-continued power and classic celebrity,—the Italian republics of the middle age, by their conspicuous position in the very front of modern European refinement,—have attracted, as they ought, the larger share of study and admiration. There is another class of communities, in many respects resembling those of Greece and Italy, which, with less of external splendor to fix regard, are yet entitled to a careful examination on the part of us, the immediate descendants of the northern nations of Europe,—namely, the great cities of England, the Netherlands, France, Germany, and the Baltic. Whilst, in the rural districts of these countries, the feudal system struck deep root, and the great baronial aristocracy were exclusively possessed of power,—in the large cities, on the contrary, with their dense population, there was a spirit of liberty at work from the beginning; and out of them issued forth the power and influence of the *commons*, and *tiers-état*, to change the face of all Europe.

We propose, in illustration of this important subject, after saying a few words on the political organization of the communities in question, to run over the leading incidents in the history of one of them, Ghent, the chief among the Flemish free

cities, and for a while the turning point in the politics of Western Europe.

Rome, it is familiarly known, was in the outset a mere municipality, not a nation, in the sense which this word bears at the present day. The population of Greece and Italy was in the old time distributed in cities, not in states; and the government of Rome, like that of Athens, was a civic, not a national organization. As the conquests of Rome proceeded, she made war upon cities, she contracted alliances with cities, she established colonies in the form of cities; and when the power of the Republic was at length supreme, it consisted of a great multitude of municipalities stripped of their proper independence, that is, of the powers of sovereignty, of the right of peace and war, but in every other particular retaining a civic constitution analogous to that of Rome. When the Roman Empire fell into pieces, the great cities composing it naturally and readily resumed the sovereignty which they had anciently possessed, or took it upon them for the first time in the mere exercise of the duty of self-defence. In Italy, where the municipal organization was more firmly established than in Gaul or Britain, and where the Barbarians were less entirely victorious, the cities speedily rose again to opulence and power. But the Franks, Saxons, and Goths, who gained the western provinces of the Empire, were more successful in the work of destruction than the Lombards and other invaders of Italy. Hence, the municipal organization, which balanced the feudal system in Italy, became quite subordinate to it in the dominions of the Franks and Saxons. In Modern Italy, the feudal nobility left their mountain fastnesses and isolated strongholds, to enter into the great cities as citizens, not as masters; and they severally gained the control of Milan, Florence, and so forth, by usurpation, not by conquest. But in the north of France and in the Netherlands, the cities were compelled to enter unreservedly into the system of feudality, and wear the yoke of the great barons, upon whom the soil, and with it the rights of sovereignty, devolved. In process of time, as the inhabitants of the cities acquired riches, strength, and a sense of the oppression of their feudal superiors, they began to take up arms against the barons on whom they depended, and extorted from the latter various concessions in charters of immunity, which constitute the legal origin of popular rights in modern Europe.

Bearing in mind these preliminary remarks, let us now approach to an individual case, to witness the development of the germ of liberty under the auspices of civic intelligence and patriotism, and trace the vicissitudes of a long contest between feudal power and popular right ;—for doing which, the works at the head of this article supply us with abundant materials of the highest authority.

It is one of the foibles of antiquaries to carry back the origin of states and cities to a far distant period, and to find some splendid name in the obscurity of traditionary lore as the imaginary founder of communities, which probably owed their beginnings to the chance association of humble individuals. Hercules is the putative father of many a city along the shores of the Mediterranean. Æneas proved a ready resource for less presuming fabulists. The conquests of Julius Cæsar in Gaul and Britain have rendered it convenient for the chroniclers of the middle ages to ascribe to him the honor of numerous establishments, which rose to rank in modern times. Ghent, among the rest, has her legend on this subject, which supposes that the name she originally bore was Gaia or Caia, after the prenomén of the Dictator. Another tradition traces the foundation of the city to the Vandals, who, it is thought, gave it the name of Vanda, which afterwards became corrupted into Ganda, the Latin name equivalent to Ghent. Each of these theories has more of fancy than of fact in its composition.

Ghent does not make its appearance in history until the seventh century, when Dagobert despatched Saint Amand thither to convert the Pagan inhabitants to Christianity. It seems to have struggled along in common with the other towns under the sway of the Merovingian Franks, amid the barbarism of those times, without being the scene of any remarkable occurrence, until the ninth century, the disastrous epoch of the incursions of the Normans. Ghent was too near to the sea-coast not to suffer greatly from the merciless inroads of those licentious pirates, who were so long the scourge and terror of Western Europe. In 811 we find Charlemagne constructing a fleet of boats at Ghent for the purpose of opposing the Normans. In 868 Baldwin, first Count of Flanders, surnamed Bras-de-Fer, or Iron-Arm, a quality that seems to have been very desirable in that age, raised fortifications professedly to protect Ghent from the same robbers, which fortifications afterwards became the means of overawing the citizens themselves.

They began, about this time, to exhibit wealth and numbers, and in the year 960 gave the first signal example of the spirit of independence, for which they subsequently became remarkable. The story is, that Ghent was besieged in that year by the Kings of France, England, and Scotland, who made a vow that if the city were not speedily surrendered, they would raze it to its foundations and sow the ruins with corn. Nothing daunted by the menace, the inhabitants made so brave a defence that the siege was abandoned by their enemies, the King of England being permitted to enter the city and scatter a handful of grain in the market place, to comply with his rash vow.

Indeed, the characteristic traits of courage, industry, enterprise, and love of liberty, which so long distinguished the people of Ghent, had ere now become fully developed. Europe was recovering slowly from the terrible ravages of the Normans, and the patient Flemings being among the first to avail themselves of returning tranquillity, Count Baldwin the younger introduced the manufacture of cloths at Ghent. The inhabitants devoted themselves successfully to agriculture, commerce, and manufactures, chiefly of woollen goods, for which the raw material was obtained in England. Under these circumstances, notwithstanding the occurrence of the customary calamities of the middle ages, namely, occasional pestilence and conflagration, and continual war, Ghent had acquired great comparative prosperity towards the close of the twelfth century, when the mania of the Crusades seized on the nobles and proved so useful to the humbler *bourgeois*, peasantry, and serfs, who were enabled to purchase numerous privileges from the necessities of their feudal lords.

The inhabitants of Ghent profited largely by the circumstances of the time, which gave dignity and strength to the municipalities of the Low Countries. Under Philip of Alsace, in the year 1178, they were released from all the incidents of villenage, gained territorial rights, the privilege of assembling to deliberate on their public affairs, of being governed by *échevins*, or municipal magistrates, elected by themselves, and of possessing a public seal, a *beffroi* or watch tower, and judicial authority. At this period, many of the citizens of Ghent had accumulated riches, and they began to build those fortified dwellings, flanked with turrets, which are still seen in some parts of the city. They obtained, at the same time,

numerous privileges for their trade and manufactures, which stimulated the natural proneness of the inhabitants of the Netherlands for cultivating the useful arts. Their commerce was greatly extended by the institution of the Hanseatic League. From the Emperor Frederic they received a concession of the free navigation of the Rhine. In the year 1191, Ghent was made the capital of Flanders. Soon afterwards Baldwin of Hainault, the successor of Philip, granted them many additional immunities, such as that no edict of the Count should have the force of law without being confirmed by the citizens, and that they might construct fortifications for the protection of the city or of individuals. The next Count, Baldwin IX., who became Emperor of Constantinople at the time of the Crusades, also liberally encouraged the industry of Ghent.

Under Ferrand and Jeanne, in the year 1228, the *thirty-nine* were established as the depositaries of the municipal powers, a body which afterwards became famous in the Flemish annals. Many cessions of land were also made to the city during the thirteenth century; and by its gradual but rapid increase of territory, wealth and inhabitants, it had now become more extensive and populous than the capital of France. It was visited by Petrarch at this period, who spoke with admiration of the industrious population, which he found superior to any he had seen since his departure from Italy. And it was not long before Ghent, having prospered so wonderfully under the judicious policy of its Counts, who easily saw that they could in no way derive so much revenue from its inhabitants as by fostering their enterprise and industry, rose to possess political importance, and to be capable of exercising a marked influence in the affairs of Europe.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century, Gui de Dampierre, Count of Flanders, was holden prisoner in France, while Charles de Valois took possession of Ghent in the name of Philippe le Bel. This prince suppressed the *thirty-nine*, and substituted a different body for the government of the city, which was placed in charge of one of his favorites called Jacques de Chatillon. The Flemings rose in arms in behalf of their native sovereign, and encountering a numerous army under Robert of Artois, at Courtrai, in the year 1302, gained the splendid victory of Courtrai, in which the flower of the French nobility fell before the brave burghers of Bruges and Ghent. On this memorable day, 8000 gilt spurs adorned the

triumph of the Flemings, from which circumstance this engagement was called the Battle of the Spurs ; and the result was the re-establishment of Gui de Dampierre in his authority. This was among the earliest occasions, in which the inhabitants of Ghent distinguished themselves in the great contests of that age ; but others followed in quick succession, in consequence of the troubles which broke out in Flanders under Count Louis de Crécy.

The people of Ghent supported their Count against the revolted inhabitants of Bruges on various occasions, and finally at the battle of Cassel in the year 1328, which proved so fatal to the insurgent Flemings. But afterwards the intrigues of Edward III., of England, who threatened to deprive them of the supply of wool so indispensably necessary to the subsistence of their manufactures, induced them to take part against Count Louis. They made choice of the famous James van Artevelde, a man of distinguished birth as well as talents, to be *Ruwaert* or Protector of Ghent. His relative Siger of Courtrai had been executed in the year 1337, for opposition to Count Louis ; but this example did not deter Artevelde from entering on the same career of patriotism, in defence of the rights of his fellow citizens, against the authority and influence of France. In the year 1338, he led the people of Ghent against Bruges, Ypres, and other towns, and conquered the whole of Flanders. At the siege of Tournai in the year 1340, he commanded the Flemish contingent of 40,000 men in the army of the Allies, leagued against Philippe de Valois. The truce that ensued did not deprive him of his authority, which was in a manner absolute throughout Flanders. To evade the sentence of excommunication pronounced against the people of Ghent at this time, on account of their being false to the oath of allegiance to the king of France, which they had previously taken, Artevelde suggested that they should acknowledge Edward III., as king of France, so as to reconcile their friendship for him with their oaths. He introduced into Ghent a classification of the inhabitants, in imitation of the internal system of Florence, and thus organized the brave artisans so that their masses could be called into action at a moment's warning. He divided the people into three classes, one consisting of the proprietors and capitalists, another of the weavers, and a third of fifty-two other trades of the city, each class having its dean, who possessed considerable executive power.

Artevelde enrolled himself in the company of brewers, in order to rank with the common people, and was chosen their dean. These arrangements, which continued in force through all Flanders until the middle of the sixteenth century, gave new energy to the inhabitants of Ghent, and enabled Artevelde to apply their forces promptly to the accomplishment of any public object. He consulted the wishes of the clergy, who repeatedly supplied him with money for the expenses of government, was beloved by the merchants, because he rendered commerce flourishing, and respected by the army, which he had so often conducted to victory. In fact, for seven years this extraordinary man maintained his authority in Ghent, raising the city to the highest pitch of prosperity, until he was basely assassinated, in the year 1344, by some of the partisans of Count Louis.

Van Artevelde had attained a degree of authority and influence which no Count of Flanders ever possessed, and attained it by the simple force of superior talents. Eminently endued with skill as an orator, he knew how to move at will the unstable multitude, whom it was his fortune to rule. Having travelled and frequented courts, he exhibited the nobleness and native dignity of one born to wear a coronet. Simple and popular in his intercourse with his fellow-citizens, he displayed, among men of higher standing, the penetrating genius and varied intelligence of the profound statesman, and succeeded, with all, in communicating to his enterprises the air of being intended to effect some plausible object of public good. The nobles and princes, those lawgivers and rulers by the right of birth, whom he displaced for a time, did not, of course, bear any affection to his memory; but the inquisitive and free searching erudition of modern times is more just to the reputation of a man, whom no hereditary sovereign of his country ever surpassed, and who governed by the right of popular election, which the world now seems resolved to think as valid a title to political power as primogeniture.

The struggle of that period, although on the face of it a dispute of rival foreign factions, that is, the French and the English, was in fact between the conflicting pretensions of growing independence among the people and the spirit of feudalism resisting their efforts to be partially free. It is, therefore, a cause, in which every well wisher of the human family should sympathize. Notwithstanding the untimely death of Artevelde,

his party was then completely successful. The people of Ghent bore arms under King Edward before Calais, and compelled the French and their young Count, Louis de Mâle, to acknowledge and confirm their ancient privileges, and especially to release them from all obligation to give aid in the wars of France against England.

For many years after this epoch, Ghent participated largely in the extraordinary prosperity of Flanders, which flourished remarkably amid the barbarism of the rest of Northern Europe. But Louis de Mâle could not forget the humiliation, which he had sustained at the hands of the bold and free-hearted burghers of Ghent. Since his admission to the inheritance of his ancestors, they had repeatedly contributed enormous sums of money to pay off his debts, and at length became weary of continually feeding his extravagance and profusion. He obtained what he wanted by applying to the people of Bruges, whom he recompensed for their compliance, by giving them permission to construct a canal for conducting the waters of the Lys directly from Deynse to Bruges. Incensed at the prosecution of a plan, the effect, and perhaps the design of which they saw was to prejudice their own commerce, the people of Ghent flew to arms, and under the command of the dean of the boatmen, named Yoens, they dispersed the laborers on the new canal, and lighted up again the flames of war in Flanders.

Louis de Mâle was nothing loath to have an opportunity of trying conclusions once more with his turbulent subjects. The insurgent party bore the *nom de guerre* of the White-caps. Their leader, Yoens, was brave and unscrupulous, possessed of a popular eloquence and an enterprising spirit, which gave him great influence among his countrymen. Count Louis despatched his steward with a party of two hundred horsemen, to secure the person of Yoens; but the White-caps fell upon them, slew the steward, tore in pieces the banner of the prince, and ravaged the houses of his adherents. Matters had now gone too far for peace, and the White-caps assembled to the number of 10,000, and proceeded to sack and burn the rich castle of Woldeghe, belonging to Louis, which he had constructed and adorned at vast expense. They then marched against Alost, Termonde, Ninove, and Deynse, which submitted to their authority, and made common cause with them in defence of the common liberties of Flanders. On his return from these ex-

peditions, Yoens died very suddenly, not without suspicion of being poisoned, and the burghers of Ghent elected four captains to command them, among whom Pieter van den Bossche was the most prominent. These leaders continued the war for a while with various fortune; but they soon found that the spirit of the people began to flag, and that a man of more popular talents was needed to infuse energy into the ranks of the insurgents. Van den Bossche had his eye upon the person demanded by the exigencies of the occasion, and was sufficiently disinterested to be willing to descend from his present elevation, and act a secondary part, when the good of his country required the sacrifice at his hands.

During the preceding year, a census had been taken of the male inhabitants of Ghent between fifteen and sixty years of age and capable of bearing arms, which many historians state at the large number of 80,000 men. Their prosperity in commerce and the arts had introduced luxury and license in its train. The operative classes could earn a subsistence by the labor of two or three days in the week, and had ample leisure for the gratification of disorderly propensities. Now, when they were pressed by the troops of Count Louis, they recalled the days of Van Artevelde, to whom they ascribed so much of their flourishing condition, and whose brilliant abilities and popular principles they recollected with veneration and profound regret. Would that James van Artevelde still lived! was the daily cry in Ghent. He did live, unnoticed and almost unknown, in the person of his son, Philip van Artevelde, the god-son of Queen Philippa of England, who, although in obscurity, and yet untouched by the impulse of ambition, was the heir of all the talents of the celebrated brewer of Ghent, the companion of kings, and the champion of his country. Followed by the principal burghers of the city, Van den Bossche repaired to the house of Van Artevelde, and invited him to assume the rank of his father. Philip yielded to the call of his country or of ambition, and was conducted to the *Marché au Vendredi*, where he received the oath of fidelity on the part of the people, and swore in his turn to maintain their rights and immunities inviolate. (February 1381.)

One of the first acts of his administration was a tribute of justice to the memory of his father and to the majesty of the laws violated in his person, which gave an earnest of the energy of his own character and purposes. He caused twelve of

the individuals concerned in the assassination of James van Artevelde to be punished with death. A military code, promulgated by him soon afterwards, one provision of which was that every man who left the fight without a wound should be imprisoned on bread and water forty days, was equally indicative of the resolute spirit of the new dictator. The time soon came for testing the strength of his party in the field of battle. A few months after the elevation of Van Artevelde to power, Louis de Mâle laid siege to Ghent, and encamped at Heusden with an imposing army. He was beaten in the battle of Gentbrugge; and his cousin and favorite, Gaultier d'Enghien, being slain by means of an ambuscade, he was compelled to break up his camp.

Van Artevelde, conceiving this to be a favorable occasion for treating with Louis, and bringing about his restoration to power on equitable conditions, sent twelve senators to Harlebeke to propose an accommodation. But the Count would agree to no treaty, without a stipulation that he might select two hundred of the inhabitants, and shut them up in the prisons of Lille. It was easy to see that Van Artevelde and his friends, the steady friends of the people, would be swept off by virtue of this clause, and besides losing their own lives, would leave the Flemings exposed to new exactions, with no bold hearts remaining to resist the Count's usurpations. To break up such an arrangement, Van Artevelde and his confidant, Van den Bossche, adopted an expedient, whose boldness was its only recommendation. When Simon Bette and Gilbert de Grutere, the chiefs of the embassy, who had thus betrayed the interests of the city, had made their report to the people, Van den Bossche stepped up to Gilbert de Grutere, and struck his dagger to his heart, while Van Artevelde did the same to Simon Bette. Another fierce struggle with Louis was the necessary consequence of this summary act of vengeance.

Meanwhile the movements of Louis had reduced the people of Ghent to a state of extreme want and misery. He persisted in reserving the right to punish capitally, at discretion, and in requiring that all the burghers should march out to meet him with cords around their necks, and kneel before him in humble petition for mercy. Van Artevelde proposed these degrading terms to the famished people, and finding them resolved to attempt any desperate enterprise rather than submit to such

humiliation, determined to march against Bruges, which had declared for Louis, and where the prince was then quartered. Having arranged his plans, and made a distribution of all the food remaining in the city, he marched forth at the head of 5000 picked men, with 300 pieces of artillery placed in cars, and took a position about a league from Bruges, where, entrenched behind his cars, he awaited the coming up of Count Louis.

Van Artevelde's forces were enfeebled by hunger, but they were brave and well armed, and they were steeled against all fear of consequences by the utter hopelessness of their present situation. They must die of starvation as it was, and they could but die at worst, if they did their duty in the field, and were unsuccessful; if they conquered, the boon they gained would be incalculably great. Mass was celebrated on the spot by a party of priests who had followed to bless the enterprise, and more than three quarters of the soldiers partook of the communion as doomed men. Van Artevelde then addressed his followers in a most animating speech, as they stood ready for the onset. Count Louis came to the attack with a force of 40,000 men; but Van Artevelde received him manfully, and suddenly unmasking his cannon, which had been concealed behind the cars, he gained, in despite of the superior numbers of his assailants, the complete and splendid victory of Boverhout (1382). The men of Ghent entered Bruges in triumph, pursuing the Count so hotly that he barely escaped with life by concealing himself in the bed of some female of low condition. All Bruges was compelled to take the oath of fidelity to Ghent, those who refused being put to death. An immense booty was conveyed to Ghent, including the gilt dragon, which still adorns the Beffroi. All Flanders now submitted to Ghent, and Van Artevelde, on his return, received the honors of a triumph, and was proclaimed the father and saviour of his country.

With his accustomed magnanimity, Van Artevelde again proposed a reconciliation between Louis and his revolted subjects, to which end he entreated the mediation of the young king of France, Charles VI. But the proud military barons of that age, alarmed at the spread of popular principles, indicated by the rising, called the *Jacquerie* among the peasantry of France, and by the repeated quarrels of the Flemings with their princes, had resolved to join heart and hand with Louis de Mâle for

his re-establishment in his inheritance, and for the destruction of the usurping burgher-sovereign, who gave such terrible lessons of liberty and victory to their serfs by means of his gallant men of Ghent. Under their counsels, the king treated the message of Van Artevelde with scorn, and mustered a powerful army of his own subjects for the succor of Louis de Mâle. The men of Ghent met with several minor reverses, and were finally overcome in the bloody battle of Roosebeke, in which Van Artevelde and 20,000 of his followers were slain. They fought bravely and perseveringly, but fell before the superior skill or prowess of the chivalry of France.

This event settled the question at issue between the feudal aristocracy and their uneasy vassals, and postponed the deliverance of Europe for three hundred years. All Flanders, except Ghent alone, immediately submitted to the Count; but the men of Ghent still held out. To the envoys, whom he sent to treat with them, they replied that they would never acknowledge his authority. 'No,' said they, 'he is not our sovereign, but our tyrant. Resolved to dare all, and suffer all, we declare war against him unto death, and if he re-enter our city, it must be to reign over ashes and dead bodies.' Having at their head Francis Ackerman, the companion and successor of Van Artevelde, they continued the war with invincible pertinacity. At length, Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, who aspired to the possession of Flanders as son in law to Louis de Mâle, and who feared, that unless he could effect an accommodation, the whole country would fall into the hands of France by right of conquest, made such concessions as led to a stable peace, by granting a full pardon and a confirmation of all their privileges to the brave citizens of Ghent (1385). But the burgher power had been shattered in the disastrous battle of Roosebeke; and although the spirit of liberty broke out among them from time to time, in consequence of the oppressions of their princes of the house of Burgundy, it was never afterwards so brilliantly displayed, as under the direction of the two Van Arteveldes.

The men of Ghent followed Philip the Good to the siege of Calais in the year 1435, and were always in quarrel with the citizens of Bruges. Indeed, they continued to yield a turbulent obedience to their sovereign until the year 1449, when they took up arms on account of some obnoxious duties imposed by Philip. The contest was long continued and disas-

trous to both parties, the principal towns of Flanders being taken first by one and then by the other, as the chances of war vibrated between them. The men of Ghent were finally vanquished in a bloody battle, fought on the plains of Gavre, losing 16,000 soldiers, who perished on the field or were drowned in the waters of the Scheldt. Being compelled to submit after this defeat, they obtained a humiliating peace only at the expense of a heavy fine, and the sacrifice of a part of their immunities. At the inauguration of Charles the Bold (1467), they sought to regain what they lost in the treaty of Gavre, but, awed by the vindictive temper of that prince, they submitted anew, and suffered a further abridgment of the liberties they cherished so dearly.

When the splendid succession of the house of Burgundy devolved upon the feeble daughter of Duke Charles, the people of Ghent, still taking the lead in the affairs of their country, defeated the attempts of the intriguing Louis XI. of France to gain possession of Flanders. Having ascertained that Mary was disposed to follow too implicitly the counsels of her two ministers, the Seigneur d' Imbercourt and the Chancellor Hugonet, they arrested these unfortunate men, and caused them to be beheaded, in spite of the entreaties and remonstrances of Mary. They followed up this bold deed by concluding a matrimonial alliance for this princess with Maximilian of Austria, son of the Emperor Frederic. On the death of Mary, a dispute arose between the people of Ghent and Maximilian, who severally claimed the wardship of her young children, and for several years the citizens maintained their pretensions. Maximilian finally compelled them to submit by the German troop which he was enabled to levy in his paternal states, and would have laid waste the city but for the remonstrances of Philippe de Clèves, who represented to him that in destroying Ghent he lost 'the flower and pearl of all his dominions' (1485). The inhabitants, however, were not long quiet, for three years afterwards they rose against him once more, and thus drew upon themselves the resentment of the Emperor Frederic. This new foe entered Belgium with a formidable army, and laid siege to Ghent, but was manfully resisted by the burghers under Philippe de Clèves and Adrian Vilain, and forced to make a shameful retreat from their territory.

Ghent has the honor to number among the great men, who were born within her walls, the Emperor Charles V. His

mother, Juana of Arragon, was delivered of the future monarch in a private cabinet, whither she had retired for a moment from the festivities of a ball, (Feb. 25, 1500). This cabinet was embellished during his reign with bas-reliefs in honor of the event, of which it was the scene, but was neglected and forgotten in after years, until M. Voisin, the historian of Ghent, by following the exact indications given by one of the old chronicles, discovered the place in the humble use of one of the lumber-rooms of a cotton manufactory. Charles appears to have entertained a strong feeling of sincere attachment towards his native city, although, when he rose to be king of Spain, Naples, and the Indies, and Emperor of Germany, Flanders became of necessity a less prominent object of his attention. Under the mild rule of his aunt, Margaret of Austria, and his sister Mary, Ghent enjoyed a long period of peaceful submission, and flourished greatly, notwithstanding the continual wars of the ambitious Emperor.

Guicciardini visited Ghent at this period, and speaks in high terms of the prosperity of the city. He describes it as being 'strong, handsome, and one of the largest cities in Europe, having ample suburbs, and being likened by many to the magnificent and populous city of Milan.' The burghers he characterizes as 'highly informed, great politicians, severe, and of a martial spirit.' He signalizes two things in which Ghent was peculiar, and they both show how far this city was in advance of the rest of Northern Europe. 'In Ghent,' he says, 'they exhibit great piety and good order in the establishment of schools and regulations for the support and nourishment of a large number of paupers, who are educated at the expense of the city. Here, also, for parade of grandeur and magnificence, they maintain lions, bears, wolves, and other cruel wild beasts from foreign countries.'

The despotic spirit of Charles, which, in depriving the Spaniards of their franchises, contributed so largely to bring on the ages of abasement, under which the Peninsula has half become a desert, could ill brook any demonstration of their ancient love of liberty, on the part even of his Flemish countrymen. Unfortunately for Ghent, that city became involved in a quarrel with the Emperor, wherein, although the latter was wholly in the wrong, might got the better of right. It happened thus. In the year 1539, Charles gave orders to levy an extraordinary tax of twelve hundred thousand florins in the Low Countries,

for aid in prosecuting a war against France. The people of Ghent, who then carried on a most extensive and lucrative commerce with France, refused their consent to the subsidy, alleging in justification of their refusal, that by the ancient charters of the city, which the ancestors of the Emperor had conceded, and which he himself had sworn to maintain, no tax could be imposed on them without their express approbation. Hereupon the Governess, Mary of Hungary, arrested, in Brussels, Mechlin, and Antwerp, all the merchants of Ghent, who happened to be in those cities. This act of arbitrary violence aroused the old feelings of independence among the people. They immediately sent deputies to the Emperor in Spain to justify themselves and demand the release of their fellow-citizens ; but Charles received them with a sternness that was new to them, and sent their cause back to his council of Mechlin, which adjudged their pretensions to be unfounded. Irritated to madness by this unjust decree, they now flew to arms in defence of the liberties of Flanders, regardless of the irresistible power and austere temper of the prince, whose resentment they provoked.

They began by expelling from the city all the nobles who had fixed their residence there, and imprisoning the officers of the Emperor. Next they subjected to the torture and then to sentence of death, Lievin Pyn, one of the Deans, who was accused of having removed or destroyed the charter under which they claimed the right of intervening in the levy of all taxes demanded by their sovereigns. In short, they appointed a council of safety, commenced repairing their fortifications, and openly raised the standard of revolt. Conscious, however, of their incapacity to make head alone against the forces of Charles, they counted upon the hostility of France towards him, as offering them chances of success. Accordingly they despatched envoys to Francis I., proposing to acknowledge him as sovereign of Flanders, and tendering their aid to enable him to reconquer all the ancient provinces of France. By an absurd refinement of generosity, not called for by any reasonable principles of honor, and totally unmerited by the conduct of Charles, who had scrupled at no device of political fraud to ruin Francis, this monarch not only rejected this proposal with scorn, but most unfairly communicated their plans to the Emperor. Encouraged thus by the misguided chivalry of his injured rival, Charles asked and obtained permission to cross the kingdom

of France for the purpose of more speedily repairing to Ghent, and punishing the refractory burghers; thus committing himself, although he kept faith with no man, when it was or seemed to be for his present interest to be treacherous, to the good faith and hospitality of the credulous Francis.

When the men of Ghent found that they had been betrayed to their prince by Francis, and that Charles was marching on them with a large force, which they had no sufficient means to withstand, they hastily despatched deputies to beg for mercy. Charles haughtily replied, that he should appear among them only as a sovereign, with the sceptre in one hand and the sword in the other. He entered Ghent without opposition (February 24, 1540), and having caused the gates to be shut, and posted a strong garrison within the walls, he proceeded to take measures to punish the inhabitants. While deliberating upon this subject, he asked the advice of the cruel Duke of Alba, who answered that he ought to raze the city to the ground. Charles conducted the Duke to the gallery of the Beffroi, that the latter might obtain a clear idea of the immense size and wealth of the city; and then asked him in the French language how many Spanish skins it would take to make a *glove* of such magnitude:—‘Combien il fallait de peaux d’Espagne pour faire un *gant* de cette grandeur.’ Alba received the rebuke in silence, perceiving that the Emperor was shocked at the brutality of such a proposal as the total destruction of Ghent. The sentence actually passed upon the city was sufficiently severe.

The cause of Ghent was tried in presence of the Emperor himself, and the city was pronounced guilty of high treason in the first degree. Twenty-six of the principal citizens were capitally executed, and a still greater number banished, their estates being confiscated for the benefit of the imperial treasury. The magistrates, thirty of the most eminent citizens, the deans of each trade, with fifty other persons, were condemned to walk in public, bare-footed and bare-headed, with ropes on their necks, and beg pardon of the Emperor and his sister. The magistrates were also condemned to wear a rope round the neck on all public occasions, as a permanent mark of ignominy; but they afterwards converted their humiliating badge into an ornament, by employing a rich cord of silk, worn in the form of a scarf. All the fortifications of the city were at the same time demolished, its franchises and privileges suppressed,

and its revenues, arms, and municipal property sequestered, including the bells, which had played too noisy a part during the insurrection to pass unnoticed. In fact, the Emperor joyfully availed himself of this opportunity to break down the free spirit and abolish the immunities of the inhabitants of the Netherlands. Ghent, which owed so much of her prosperity to her free institutions, never recovered from this fatal blow.

But calamities of a still more overwhelming character were now impending over her, in common with the other cities of Flanders and the Low Countries, under the reign of one of the most ferocious of the tyrants, who are so often imposed on mankind by hereditary succession in public authority. Philip II. visited Ghent for the last time in the year 1559. He had not yet proceeded in the execution of those measures of insane misrule, which filled the Netherlands with bloodshed and misery for so many years ; but his temper was beginning to be too well known, and his purposes were become a subject of deep apprehension. In the assembly of the States General, holden at the Maison-de-ville, the syndic of Ghent remonstrated against the continued occupation of the country by foreign troops, in the genuine language of republican truth. ‘ Why,’ said the syndic, ‘ is our defence entrusted to the arms of foreigners ? Is it that the world should be induced to regard us as cowards, as men incapable of defending themselves ! Why is a peace concluded, if the charges of war are still to be pressing heavily upon us ? So long as we had enemies to combat, necessity suspended our complaints ; but now, when peace is restored to us, we cannot disguise our despair. Why maintain, at so much expense, these foreign bands, who feel no sympathy in the welfare of a country, which they may be called upon to quit tomorrow ? You have still in your service courageous Belgians, to whom your late father entrusted the safeguard of his States, in times infinitely more stormy ; why suspect now that fidelity which they have invariably maintained towards your ancestors for so many ages ? ’—Confounded at the boldness of this address, and starting at the iteration of the word foreigner, Philip rose abruptly, crying, ‘ I am a foreigner also : perhaps you would like to get rid of me as well as the others.’ Happy would it have been for Belgium if the syndic could have replied in the affirmative, and if some Van Artevelde had been there to accomplish so desirable an object.

The year 1566 witnessed the horrible outrages of the *Icon-*

oclasts, as those wild sectarians were denominated, who pillaged the churches, and destroyed all their ornaments of sculpture and painting. The field preachings of these persons commenced near Ghent, in a plain only half a league without the gates, where the famous Herman Stricker attracted immense crowds of the inhabitants of the city, carried away by a resistless enthusiasm, and animated with the spirit which provokes and encounters martyrdom. Among them were multitudes of intelligent men, shocked, as in other countries, by the abuses of the established church, and anxious to introduce a reformed religion. Unhappily the excesses of the more desperate and less enlightened among those of their party threw a blight over their cause, from which it never recovered in Belgium. The image-breakers assembled at Ghent, to the number of 400 men of the very dregs of the people (August 22, 1566), and, after announcing their intentions to the magistrates of the city, and their resolution to effect what they had undertaken, by force if necessary, they proceeded, not only unopposed, but with a band of peace officers in their company, to prevent any disorder from happening, other than the violence which they had thus deliberately set about. They began with the cathedral church of Saint Bavon, entering it armed with axes, hammers, and pikes,—and performing the work of devastation at midnight by the blaze of lighted torches, which communicated a kind of horrid brilliancy to the scene of sacrilegious outrage, enacted by these lawless men. They wrenched the images of the saints from their pedestals and niches, dashing them in pieces with their heavy axes, tore up the paintings, despoiled the sculptured monuments, and wreaked their vengeance upon every work of art or taste which enriched the splendid edifice. In the course of three or four days all the churches and convents in Ghent were subjected to a similar visitation, being ravaged and defaced with the brutal fury of madmen or savages,—so as to give but too much cause of resentment to the bigoted Court of Philip of Spain.

Incidents of this kind occurring at the same time throughout Flanders and Brabant, were the commencement of the war of revolution, which the atrocities of Philip had aroused. The Duke of Alba was now transferred from the viceroyalty of Italy, to be the fit instrument of his cruel master in devastating the Netherlands, under the pretence of restoring the tranquillity of the country. Under the government of this merciless op-

pressor, who rendered the ancient and noble name of Toledo a by-word for the very extremity of despotic mal-administration, Ghent, of course, felt its full share of the horrors of that period. Confiscation and death filled all hearts with mourning and terror. Hardly a day passed when the fires of the Holy Office were not lighted up in the *Marché au Vendredi*, for the torture of some unhappy victim of superstition or cupidity. Thousands of the citizens fled in despair from their homes, carrying their industry and skill into Germany and England. Much of the prosperity of the latter is ascribable to the manufactures introduced by the multitude of exiles, whom religious persecution drove from the continent. It is affirmed, that at this time (1570) half the houses in the city were abandoned. The year was marked by a complication of the direst afflictions; for a pestilence raged in the most populous region of the city, and soon afterwards three quarters of the streets were wholly inundated by the rising of the waters, so that it became necessary to convey food by means of boats to the starving occupants of the houses.

The year 1576 was memorable at Ghent for the treaty between the states of Holland on the one hand, and those of Belgium on the other, which, from being concluded there, is distinguished by the name of the *Pacification of Ghent*, but belongs to the general history of the country. While this celebrated compact was in the course of negotiation, the citizens were engaged in the siege of the citadel, constructed by Charles V. after the insurrection of the year 1540, and now held by a body of Spanish soldiers for Philip. In spite of all the force which the citizens could bring against it, aided, as they were, by the troops of the Prince of Orange, the besieged made an obstinate defence, displaying the characteristic pertinacity of the Spanish people in such emergencies, and occasioning infinite loss to the besiegers. When at last they were obliged to surrender, they obtained honorable terms of capitulation, and the citizens were astonished to see the *Señora Mondragon*, who had defended the fortress in the absence of her husband, issue forth at the head of only 150 men, including the sick and wounded, the sole remains of the garrison. This heroic lady had nobly performed all the duties of a brave commander, and the other females in the citadel had faithfully supported her, having displayed in the operations of the siege the activity and fearlessness of danger of veteran soldiers. When the people

had thus gained possession of the citadel, they joyfully proceeded to demolish the stronghold of tyranny, men, women and children marching out together with beat of drum and banners flying, alike eager to engage in this work of liberty and patriotism.

It is easy to conceive that the long succession of troubles, which had now for so many years weighed upon Flanders, must have produced a pernicious effect on the character and feelings of the people. The hearts of men became hardened by the continued spectacle of civil war, murder, pillage, and executions in every form of cruelty. The interruption of the ordinary means of subsistence in a large manufacturing city, threw thousands into the career of violence, as the only resource from starvation for themselves and their families. As the worst acts of Philip's tyranny had been perpetrated in the name of religion and of the Catholic church, hatred towards that church was mingled with the desire of vengeance. Nowhere had these considerations greater force than at Ghent. Two of the principal citizens, John Hembyse, and Francis de Kethulle, lord of Ryhove, took advantage of the situation of things there to institute an independent republic, of which they should be the chiefs. They sprung from families long distinguished at Ghent, were possessed of popular talents, and great energy of character, bold, unscrupulous, impatient of a foreign yoke, and preëminent for their uncompromising opposition to all the measures of the Duke of Alba. They succeeded in obtaining uncontrolled influence over the faction of the *Beggars*, (*Gueux*) as the opponents of the Catholics were content to be called, by flattering their passions, and feeding their necessities out of the plunder of churches and abbeys; and could collect a force of 20,000 followers at any moment, for the accomplishment of whatever purpose.

The Duke of Arschot had been elected Governor of Flanders by the patriots, who were now everywhere triumphant, and had come to make his residence in Ghent, as the capital of his government. Hembyse and Ryhove saw that his authority stood in the way of their prospects of ambition, and in less than a week after his arrival they raised their followers, and arrested him, with many other principal persons, on the charge of complicity in a plot in favor of Spain (October 28, 1577). For several days the populace remained under arms, occupying the great squares, while Hembyse and Ryhove seized on

the public funds, assumed the management of affairs, the first as civil, and the second as military chief, and proceeded to make a permanent organization of their new republic, professing to model it, as nearly as might be, after the plan of polity which had prevailed in ancient Greece and Rome.

In execution of their scheme, they nominated two councils, one of magistrates, and the other of military officers, by whose concurring votes all important measures were adopted. The civil council consisted of eighteen members, headed by Hembyse himself, and all of them sworn adherents of the Duumvirs. The council of war was composed of the colonels and captains of the civic bands, organized by the same controlling will. To complete the municipal democracy, they revived the companies of trades, which Charles V. had suppressed in the general sequestration of the privileges of Ghent, but which resumed their banners, and reappointed their deans, as of old. The Prince of Orange came to Ghent soon after these events, in order to procure the release of the imprisoned Catholics, and if possible substitute the regular magistracy of the city in lieu of this revolutionary government. But although he was received with the greatest magnificence, and all apparent deference was paid to his advice, his visit was wholly without effect, and his departure was the signal for commencing the disorders which signalized the rule of Hembyse and Ryhove.

Entertaining the idea of rendering Ghent impregnable and the capital of an extensive republic, the consuls began by digging ditches around the city, and demolishing the neighboring churches for materials to face the fortifications. They stripped the churches, both within and without the city, of their bells, chandeliers, and metallic utensils, to be melted into cannons, and siezed all the ornaments of gold and silver for the purpose of being coined into money. Saint Bavon was converted into the chief temple of the Protestant preachers, while Saint Nicolas became the stable and barracks of a troop of two hundred dragoons. The various rich abbeys, dispersed around the country, were pillaged and destroyed with a fury far more reprehensible than that of the iconoclasts, as the outrages of the latter were nothing but a sudden paroxysm of misguided religious zeal, while the agents of Hembyse acted from a fixed purpose of sacrilegious devastation.

While Hembyse was thus occupied within the city, his colleague Ryhove was gathering military laurels without, in vari-

ous expeditions, which terminated with brilliant success. He commanded a powerful body of troops, domestic and mercenary, which were engaged in continual combat either against opposing factions or the common enemy. Courtrai, Audenarde, Bruges, and Termonde yielded to his arms ; and the credit he thus gained led to the result which might easily have been anticipated, by awakening jealousy and dissension between the consuls themselves. The violences exercised in their name had of necessity raised up many enemies against them ; and although they abstained from taking the lives of the disaffected, and remained content with inflicting the sentence of banishment, yet general distrust and agitation could not fail to pervade a city, thus given up to the domination of a lawless faction and its ambitious leaders.

At length, after every effort to put an end to these disorders had been attempted by such of the principal individuals in Belgium, as were exempt from the sway of the chiefs of Ghent, and had failed, Elizabeth of England wrote letters to the magistrates of Ghent, reproaching them in the strongest terms for their misconduct. As the state of the contest between the Netherlands and Spain rendered the good will of Elizabeth all important to the patriots, her interposition in this instance threw Hembyse and Ryhove into some perplexity. It was given out that the Prince of Orange was preparing to come to Ghent, and employ efficacious means to depose the popular dictators. In anticipation of this, Ryhove began to look about for means of making his peace, and to attain this object he did not scruple to arrest his friend and colleague. But the populace, furious at the indignity offered to their idol, surrounded the house of Ryhove, and compelled him to set Hembyse free. The Prince of Orange finally arrived, and although he brought no troops to enforce his wishes, the influence of his name and the firmness of his character were sufficient to break down the power of the Duumvirs, and restore the regular administration of the laws. Ryhove was at this time at Termonde, and he prudently withdrew into Holland, where he lived unmolested and died a natural death. Hembyse fled from Ghent in disguise, and took refuge in Germany. After a few years, the party of the Beggars once more gained a temporary ascendancy, and recalled him to Ghent, to resume his old authority. But his love of power getting the better of his love of country, he secretly entered into negotiations with the Spaniards, which

being discovered, he was deposed, and ignominiously executed for treason, upon evident proofs of his guilt (1584). During the same year, in fact only a month after the death of Hernbyse, the Prince of Parma, having reduced nearly all Flanders, laid siege to Ghent, which was soon obliged to capitulate, and with the rest of Belgium became once more subject to Spain. By the expulsion of the Protestants, tranquillity, at least, was secured, though at the expense of the industry, wealth, and intelligence of the country. Under the mild rule of Albert and Isabella, and their successors, Ghent participated for a century in the peace and comparative prosperity, which prevailed through the whole of Belgium. It was not until the capricious ambition of Lewis XIV. disturbed the repose of all Europe, that Flanders again became the seat of war. During the reigns of Lewis XIV., and Lewis XV. Ghent was taken and retaken repeatedly by opposing armies, but without being the scene of any remarkable incidents to separate its history from that of the rest of Belgium.

During the troubles occasioned by the innovations of the Emperor Joseph II., between the years 1789 and 1791, Ghent was sufficiently prominent in the efforts then made to render the whole country independent. But the French revolution had now broken out, and events were hurried on by the all controlling power of such mighty combinations of men, that no single city could materially affect their progress. Ghent, of course, changed masters, as the tide of war swelled or ebbcd, partaking as well in the excesses of the republic, as in the adulation lavished on the person of Napoleon, and being finally disposed of by the victors of Waterloo, as best suited their own good pleasure. The days of the Artevelde had passed away, and that condition of the world, which enabled a simple burgher of Ghent to exercise a puissant influence in the general affairs of Europe, subsisted no longer. From the palmy state, which it challenged in the middle ages, Ghent had sunk down into a manufacturing capital, distinguished, it is true, for the taste, refinement, and cultivation of its inhabitants, but deprived alike of the spirit of liberty and the exuberance of wealth, which once constituted its principal distinctions.